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CONSTITUTION AND REGULATIONS

OF THE

PENITENT FEMALES' REFUGE,

BOSTON.

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A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

PENITENT FEMALES' REFUGE,

IN THE

CITY OF BOSTON.

7579.164

WITH THE

ACT OF INCORPORATION, CONSTITUTION, AND RULES AND REGULATIONS.

BOSTON:
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PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON

PENITENT FEMALES' REFUGE.

The Boston Penitent Females' Refuge first went into operation in March, 1821. For some time previous, efforts had been made for the instruction and reformation of the most ignorant and vicious part of our population, by a society of ladies, who employed two missionaries to visit and preach to them, and by an association of gentlemen, who, alternately, held religious meetings among them. In the course of these benevolent exertions, it was found that a considerable number of abandoned females expressed a strong desire to escape from their wretched mode of life. Means were accordingly taken to provide an asylum, where they should be received until places could be obtained for them in suitable families. The institution was at first small; and did not propose to retain its inmates for any longer period than should be necessary to ascertain the reality of their professed desire to reform, and to provide other safe places for them.

After the experience of a few years, it became apparent that a longer residence of the inmates in the Refuge was necessary, either to establish such habits of right feeling and conduct as should secure their permanent reformation,

or to gain the confidence of the community in the reality of such a reformation, to such a degree, as to enable the Directors to provide suitable places for them. In 1826, therefore, the institution may be said to have, in a great measure, commenced anew. The house which is now occupied, was then purchased; and provision was made for a larger number of inmates at a time. At the same time, the regulations were so altered, as to make it a condition of admission, that the candidate should possess so fixed a desire for a thorough reformation, as to be willing to give herself up to a long seclusion for the sake of obtaining it. In consequence of this alteration, the number of admissions to the Refuge was much smaller than before; but the beneficial effects, as exhibited in a thorough reformation of the inmates, were greatly increased.

The length of the residence of the inmates in the house, has varied somewhat, with different individuals. For some time after the above-mentioned change in the regulations, partly in consequence of the previous experience of the inefficacy of a short residence, and partly from the difficulty of procuring suitable places, after several had relapsed into vice, the residence was prolonged, in most cases, to about three years. More recently, however, it has become more easy to obtain places, and the experience of the last few years, authorizes the expectation of a favorable result in a much shorter period. The term fixed by the present regulations, is from one to two years; and, except for special reasons to be judged of by the Directors, unless an inmate appear to be so reformed within that time, as to warrant the institution in recommending her to a place, she is to be dismissed as irreclaimable.

The whole number that has been received into the

Refuge, since its first establishment, is 157.* Many of these, however, remained so short a time in the house, as scarcely to be brought at all under the influence of its discipline and instructions. In the earlier years, many left almost immediately after their admission; and more recently, some few have been discharged as unsuitable subjects of the care of the institution, before the expiration of their probation. The duration of the probationary term is fixed, in each case, by a committee of the Directors, who either shorten or prolong it, according to the character and deportment of the individual candidate.

The number of those who have been rescued from destruction and permanently reformed by means of this institution, it would be difficult, not to say impossible, to state with precision. In the reports of similar institutions in England, all those are reported as reformed, whose conduct in the house has been such as to entitle them to be recommended to a place. Our reports have included, in the estimate of reformed, only those who, having left the institution in this manner, have persevered in good conduct. It is of course to be expected that some will fall away; and of some, no very precise information comes to the knowledge of the Directors; especially after the lapse of several years. After making every reasonable deduction for such as have returned to a vicious course of life, there remain cases of thorough and permanent reformation, sufficient abundantly to encourage the Directors and friends of the institution in the interest and care which they bestow upon it. In some instances, those

* Of this number, 47 were born in Boston, 38 in other parts of Massachusetts, 21 in New Hampshire, 14 in Maine, 7 in Rhode Island, 3 in Connecticut, 1 in Vermont, 4 in New York, 1 in Pennsylvania, 6 in Nova Scotia, 8 in Ireland, 1 in Scotland, 1 in England, 1 in Germany, 4 unknown.

who have been for a long time abandoned to the lowest degradations of vice, have given all the evidence of a thorough change of heart and character which can be afforded, by persevering for a series of years in a humble, virtuous deportment. Many more, whose downward course had been less prolonged and less complete, have been reclaimed. And although the institution does not pretend to restore them entirely to their former condition in society, it does restore them to a state of comparative comfort and respectability, in regard to this life; and it restores them to that probation, from which they were nearly cut off, and presents to them those blessed offers of divine mercy, by which they may be prepared for the immortal happiness of another life.

The means relied upon, for the reformation of the inmates, are constant employment, and faithful moral and religious instruction. Many of them, when received, are found to be exceedingly ignorant. These are taught to read, and write, and sew, as well as to do the ordinary work of a family. All are allowed a sufficient portion of time every day, for private reading the Scriptures, &c.; and the remainder of the day is occupied chiefly in sewing. Besides the constant religious instructions and example of the superintendents, a committee of the Directors visit often, hold religious services with the family, and converse with the inmates individually, (always in the presence of one of the superintendents); and a committee of the Ladies' Auxiliary Society, visit every week for similar purposes. Religious worship is constantly held in the Refuge, every Sunday, both morning and evening, and in general, the services of a clergyman are obtained for, at least, a part of the day.

The residence of the inmates in the Refuge, is altogether voluntary. Any one is received on probation, who

professes a desire to reform, on application either to one of the Directors, or to the Ladies' Committee, or at the House, unless there should be something in the circumstances of the case, to make it very clear that she is not a proper subject of the care of the institution. The monthly committee of the Directors either decide upon her full admission, at their first subsequent visit, or they require a longer probation, as they judge best. On her full admission, each inmate promises to conform to all the regulations of the house; and to remain in it until the Directors shall think proper to procure a place for her. If, however, any inmate after a reasonable trial should become unwilling to remain, she may leave, at any time, by giving a notice of fourteen days, of her wish to do so. This rule has been in operation several years; but no person has taken advantage of it to leave the institution.

It has always been regarded as an object of great importance, to provide places for the inmates, as they leave the Refuge, in pious families in the country. This has not been always so easily accomplished as the Directors could wish. It is not to be expected, from their previous habits of life, that the inmates will always make the most efficient domestics. Yet, in many instances, they have given good satisfaction in the families to which they have gone. Some of those especially, who have come truly under the renovating influences of the gospel, have exhibited a humble docility of temper and character, and an earnest desire to be useful, which have been an interesting substitute for a higher degree of capacity.

The institution is, and ever has been, a small one. The number of inmates in the house, at one time, is not generally more than fifteen; and excepting once, for a few weeks, has never exceeded twenty. The Directors would gladly enlarge it, and would confidently rely upon

the liberality of the Christian community for the means of doing so, if a greater number could be induced to escape into it, from their destructive course of life. It is the belief of the Directors, that there are many who would gladly do this, if they could be aware that such a Refuge is open to receive them; and it is their constant desire to present this knowledge to the unhappy class of persons for whom it is designed, in such a manner, as to induce them to accept it, without taking any thing from the necessary restraints which should deter others from falling into such a course of vice and crime.

The expenses of the institution, besides what is earned by the inmates, are sustained by donations and subscriptions from its friends. The Ladies' Auxiliary Society, have undertaken the charge of clothing the inmates; the other expenses are provided by the Gentlemen's Society. The house and grounds were purchased for $7,000; and a debt of $3,750 still remains. In addition to the interest of this sum, the annual expenses amount to about $1,000. Nearly $500 is earned by the labor of the inmates, and the remainder is supplied by subscriptions. In times past the benefits of this institution have been so little known, that it has sometimes required no small exertion to obtain this sum; but the Directors are now free from all anxiety in this respect, for the future, confidently trusting that an institution which has struggled through so many obstacles, will not now be suffered to fail, of any degree of usefulness of which it is capable, for the want of sufficient pecuniary support.

Besides these direct results, another effect has been produced in the tendency to restrain the prevalence of the vice which has given occasion for the establishment of the institution. The extent of this influence cannot be precisely stated, or estimated; but there is abundant

evidence that it has been, in some instances, highly important; and there is good reason to hope, that some measures which have been recently adopted, will render it still more effectual in future.

This part of the subject has for a long time occupied the anxious attention of the Directors. It is involved in many difficulties. From the very nature of the vice to be opposed, it cannot be discussed freely, especially in its details, without great danger of communicating defilement and pollution as well as information to the public mind. The Directors had evidence that even the annual sermons which were several times preached for the institution, conducted as they were with every possible regard to propriety and delicacy, were in some instances resorted to, for purposes the very reverse of those for which they were designed. All public anniversaries have consequently been relinquished; and for several years past the Directors have not deemed it expedient, even to publish their Annual Report, believing that more injury than benefit would be likely to result from the publication of them.

There are other means however, by which this vice may be discountenanced and checked, without doing violence to the moral sense of the community. The mere fact that a society exists composed of a considerable number of individuals, whose attention is aroused to the subject, and who possess a degree of moral courage, sufficient to enable them to pursue any measures which they shall deem proper and judicious in regard to it, will have its influence. The Directors have recently adopted measures to procure the formation of auxiliary societies, in such places throughout New England as have a frequent intercourse with Boston. By means of these societies, they hope to be able both to obtain and to communicate

such information as shall have an important bearing upon the state of morals. In doing this it will be their earnest care to abstain from every thing which shall tend to vitiate the public sense, by an unnecessary familiarity with the details of crime, while they will feel themselves pledged to make a faithful, and if need be a fearless, use of such facts which may come to their knowledge, as shall seem to them capable of producing any effectual restraint upon licentious conduct.

Boston, March 20, 1834.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

In the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-three.

An Act to incorporate the Penitent Females' Refuge in the City of Boston.

Sec. 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, That Horace Fox, Edmund Parsons, Abraham A. Dame, Thomas Vose, William Jenks, John C. Proctor, Pliny Cutler, Aaron P. Cleveland, Charles Tappan, George Odiorne, John Tappan, Heman Lincoln, Edmund A. Winchester, Henry Homes, George J. Homer, Moses Grant, Francis Wayland, Jr., and Alden Bradford, together with such others as may hereafter be associated with them, and their successors, be, and they hereby are incorporated by the name of "The Penitent Females' Refuge, in the City of Boston;" and by that name shall be a Corporation forever, for the purpose of affording relief, assistance and protection to penitent females, with power to have a common seal, to receive and hold any sum or sums of money from persons disposed to promote the intentions of said Society; to make contracts relative to the objects thereof, to sue and be sued, to establish by-laws and orders for the regulation of said Society, and the due preservation and application of its funds; provided the same be not repugnant to the Constitution and Laws of this Commonwealth; and to take and hold real and personal estate, not exceeding the sum of twenty thousand dollars.

Sec. 2. Be it further enacted, That said Corporation shall annually meet in Boston, at such time and place as they may from time to time appoint, for the purpose of electing, by ballot, such officers as they may think proper, who shall hold their respective offices for the term of one year, and until others shall be elected and qualified in their stead, with such powers and duties as may be prescribed by the by-laws of said Corporation.

Sec. 3. Be it further enacted, That any two of the persons above named, be and they hereby are authorized to call the first meeting of said Corporation, by advertisement printed in any newspaper published in the city of Boston, at least seven days prior to the appointment of such meeting.

Sec. 4. Be it further enacted, That the present officers of the said association, shall continue to execute their several duties, until an election of officers shall have taken place, agreeably to the provisions of said act: provided, nevertheless, that the Legislature may alter or repeal this act, whenever it shall be deemed expedient. Copy,

A. BRADFORD, *Secretary.*

Approved by the Governor, Jan. 21, 1823.

CONSTITUTION.

Art. 1. This Society shall be known, by the name of the Penitent Females' Refuge in the City of Boston.

Art. 2. Any person who shall subscribe and pay annually, at least two dollars, for a term not less than three years, shall be a member of the Society during that time. All those who shall have acted as Directors since the incorporation of the Society, shall also be regarded as permanent members, unless they decline; and the Society shall have power to elect other members at any regular meeting, on the nomination of the Board of Directors.

Art. 3. The annual meeting, for the choice of officers, by ballot, shall be held on the first Thursday in the month of February.

Art. 4. The officers of this Society, shall be a President, a Vice President, a Corresponding Secretary, a Recording Secretary, a Treasurer, and ten Directors, who, together, shall be the Board of Directors; which Board, thus constituted, shall have the entire management and government of the house, and shall maintain a constant superintendence, by visits of inspection, made by some one or more of their own number, in such manner and order, as the Board shall prescribe; and shall make a report of their proceedings, and of the state of the Refuge, to the Society, at the annual meeting.

Art. 5. The Board shall meet once in each month. Five members shall constitute a quorum. They shall enact by-laws, to govern their own proceedings, and for the regulation of the Refuge.

Art. 6. The Board shall have power to fill all vacancies which may happen in their number by death, resignation, or non-attendance, and the persons so appointed, shall be members until the next annual meeting.

Art. 7. The Corresponding Secretary shall conduct the correspondence of the Society, under the direction of the Board.

Art. 8. The Recording Secretary shall keep a fair record of the proceedings of the Board, and of the Society. He shall also notify the members of all meetings.

Art. 9. The Treasurer shall take charge of all monies and other property belonging to the Society, and keep a just and fair copy of all his receipts and expenditures. He shall not pay out monies on account of the Institution, except by order of the Directors. His books of account shall be open for inspection, by any member of the Society, at all regular meetings. He shall also make a full report of the state of the funds at the annual meeting. He shall give satisfactory

bonds for the faithful performance of the duties of his office.

Art. 10. No person shall be employed to superintend the Refuge, but such as are well reported as persons of discretion and practical Christian piety.

Art. 11. Any four members of the Board may require a special meeting, either of the Board or of the Society.

Art. 12. This Constitution may not be altered, but at the annual meeting; such alteration having been presented in writing to the Board of Directors at a regular monthly meeting.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

OF THE PENITENT FEMALES' REFUGE, CITY OF BOSTON.

Of the Government.

1. It shall be the duty of the Superintendent to regulate and oversee all the arrangements of the house, to conduct the morning and evening devotions, to exercise a parental government over the persons committed to her charge, and by every suitable means instill into their minds the principles of industry, neatness, and piety. She will keep a register of the inmates, and of applicants for admission, and make a monthly report of the state of the house, and so far as it may be necessary, of the progress of each individual, to the Board of Directors. She will also keep an accurate account of the expenses of the house, of the articles received, and the work accomplished; and in general will be considered the responsible head of the Institution.

2. There shall be one or more Assistant Superintendents, according to the number of inmates in the house, whose duty it shall be, under the direction of the Superintendent, to oversee the work of the inmates, and to keep a watchful and friendly supervision over their whole deportment and conversation, by night as well as by day, and generally to aid the Superintendent in accomplishing the purposes of the Institution.

3. One or more monitors shall be appointed, by the Superintendent with the concurrence of the Committee of the month, of the most deserving of the inmates, to aid in the preservation of order and correct deportment.

Of Admission and Discharge.

1. Every female who is sincerely desirous of being reclaimed from a course of vice, shall be regarded as a candidate for admission, unless she is diseased or pregnant; but preference shall always be given to those whose departure from virtue

has been the least aggravated, either in character or duration.

2. Any such candidate shall be immediately received on probation, on application to either of the Directors, to any member of the Ladies' Committee, or to the Superintendent at the Refuge, unless on inquiry there shall be some reason to doubt the sincerity of her professions of a desire to reform. The case of each person thus received shall be reported to the Committee of the month at their next subsequent meeting, who shall decide on her admission either immediately, or after further delay as they shall judge best. Before her admission, she shall, in the presence of the Committee, and of the Superintendent, promise to conform to the regulations of the Refuge, and to the directions of the Superintendents.

3. Each inmate is considered as placing herself under the care of the Institution until the Directors shall think it proper to give her a regular discharge, either in consequence of a reconciliation with her friends, or by procuring for her a suitable place. If any inmate after having been regularly admitted a member, and having resided in the family a reasonable time, shall become unwilling to remain, she shall give fourteen days notice to the Superintendent of her wish to leave the Refuge. At the expiration of which period, if she still desire it, she shall be discharged.

4. The Directors, or the Committee of the month, shall always have power to dismiss any inmate for misconduct of any kind.

5. Whenever the deportment of any inmate, taken in connection with the circumstances of her case, shall, in the judgment of the Directors, render it proper, it shall be their duty, as soon as it may be in their power, to make provision for her removal, either by restoring her to her friends, if they are of a proper character, or by obtaining some other suitable place for her.

6. No inmate shall be permitted to remain in the Refuge more than from one to two years, unless under very peculiar circumstances, to be judged of by the Board of Directors. If during that time her deportment shall not have been such as to entitle her to a recommendation to a place, she shall be dismissed as irreclaimable.

7. The inmates while they continue in the Refuge will not be allowed to leave the house, unless by the express permission of the Superintendent under the sanction of the Committee of the month, and then only for a specified time and purpose.

Employment.

1. Not less than seven, nor more than eight hours shall be allowed for sleep.

2. Evening prayers will be attended at half past 8 o'clock in summer, and at 9 o'clock in winter.

3. The inmates will retire to rest as early as 10 o'clock.

4. Each inmate shall have a separate bed, and a separate recess, for the neatness and good order of which she shall be responsible.

5. The inmates will rise at the ringing of a bell at 5 o'clock in summer, and 6 o'clock in winter. Half an hour will be allowed for reading the Scriptures and private devotion; and the bell for morning prayers will be rung one hour after that for rising.

6. Prayers, both at morning and evening, will be accompanied with reading the Scriptures, and singing.

7. The day will be spent in such labor as the Superintendents shall direct.

8. All kinds of distilled or fermented spirits are absolutely prohibited, unless prescribed by the physician, and the use of tobacco and snuff is also prohibited.

9. A committee of the Ladies' Auxiliary Society will be expected to visit weekly, for the purpose of examining the state of the house, ascertaining the conduct and improvement of the inmates, and affording such advice and encouragement as may be proper.

10. No person, except the officers of the Ladies' Auxiliary Society, or a Director, shall be allowed to visit an inmate, without permission in writing from the Committee of the month; and with such a permission, the visit shall only be in the presence of one of the Superintendents. In all such cases especial care shall be taken not to violate the confidence of the inmates by exposing them to the intrusion of strangers.

Instruction and Deportment.

1. It shall be the duty of the Superintendents, by advice and instruction, as well as by a Christian example, and also by directing the reading of the inmates, constantly to teach them the principles and duties of our holy religion; it being constantly borne in mind, that whilst the importance of retrieving an injured character is to be highly valued, the necessity of that renovation of heart and life which shall be to the salvation of the soul, is of infinitely higher consequence.

2. It is expected of the inmates, that their deportment will be in conformity to the character of the instructions prescribed in the preceding rule; that they avoid all improper conversation, all mutual reproaches for past delinquency, and that they abstain from every thing inconsistent with the design of the Institution.

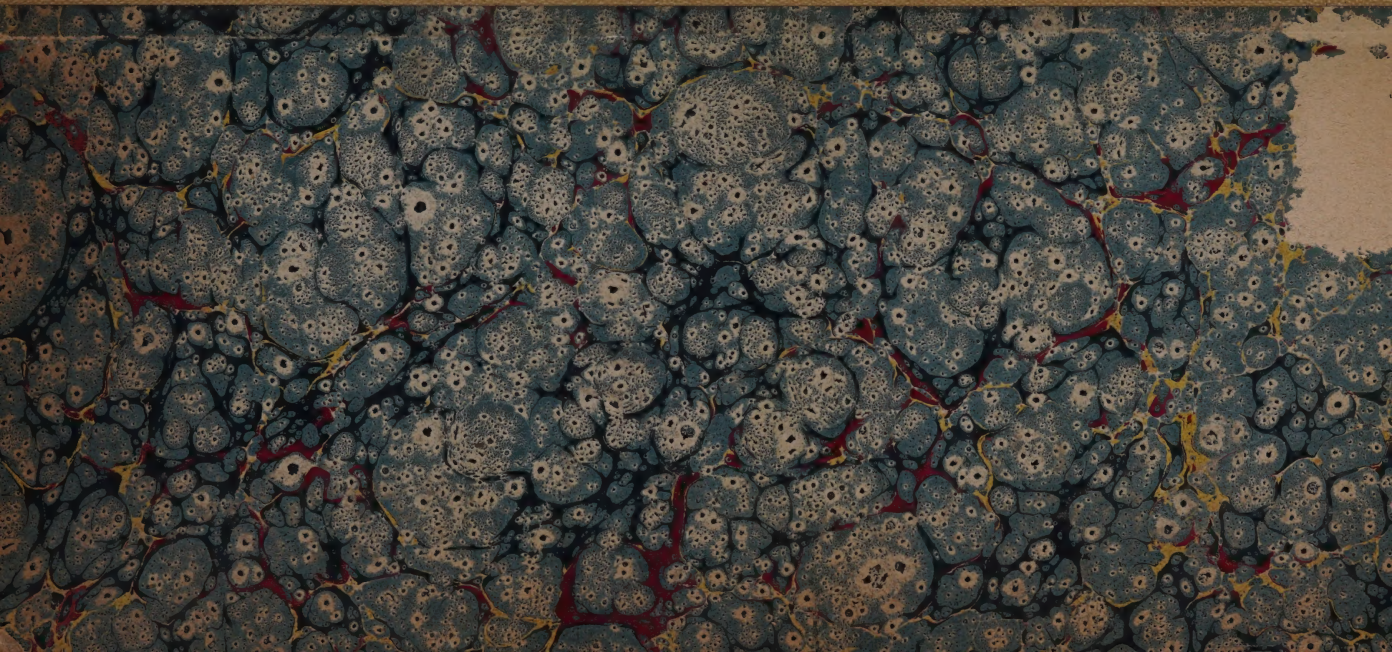
3. The Directors will provide that public worship be held in the Refuge at least once every Lord's day, when, if practicable, the services of a clergyman will be obtained; and on such other occasions as they shall appoint.

4. No person, except the Superintendents, the Ladies' Committee, or a Director, shall address the inmates, or hold any religious or other service with them, unless invited by a Director.

5. If an inmate shall express a wish to speak with the Committee, it shall be the duty of the Superintendent to mention it to the Committee at their next meeting, and if they shall judge it proper to comply with the request; they shall give her an opportunity to converse with them, without the presence of the Superintendent; two Directors being present.

OFFICERS FOR 1834.

HENRY HOMES, *President.*
E. HALE, JR., *Vice President.*
G. W. BLAGDEN, *Corresponding Secretary.*
GEORGE DENNY, *Recording Secretary.*
BENJAMIN PERKINS, *Treasurer.*

DIRECTORS.

JAMES C. DUNN.
JAMES MEANS.
JOSEPH THAYER.
SAMUEL TENNEY.
URIAH CROCKER.
ALBERT HOBART.
HENRY EDWARDS.
THOMAS A DAVIS.
JACOB ABBOTT.
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